

BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL
MEETING MINUTES

Date: December 11, 2014

Meeting No.: 197

Project: Point Street Apartments

Phase: Schematic

Location: Harbor Point P.U.D. – Point and Wills Street

PRESENTATION:

The presentation began with a statement by Mr. Michael Beatty (Beatty Development) who described the goals of the project within the context of the Harbor Point PUD. These included, but were not limited to, a recognition that great design adds value; a concern for how the buildings meet the street; the creation of inviting, experiential public spaces; respecting the context; and a desire for design that recognizes the human scale.

Mr. Kevin Johnson (Ayers Saint Gross) reviewed the changes to the design of the building, beginning with a review of the topography of the proposed elements, in particular how changes in grade are utilized to cover the central parking garage. Mr. Johnson reviewed each elevation of the structure, identifying what has been altered since the last presentation, focusing on the Panel's concerns from the last meeting, as applicable. Among the comments addressed, Mr. Johnson cited the need to 1) clearly articulate the volumes of the structure, 2) establish a richer secondary pattern, 3) modify corner tower for scale and integration in the composition, and 4) energize the plaza with programming. The building has been reduced in scale by one floor. Among the other changes, Mr. Johnson identified the material selection, including two tones of brick, glass, a basalt base line under street-level fenestrations, and metal paneling.

Landscape Architect, Mr. Richard Jones (Mahan Rykiel) reviewed the changes to the site since the last presentation. Included in those Panel comments were, 1) to loosen the strong geometric patterning of the spaces, and 2) consider the development of more intimate spaces. Mr. Jones gave greater description to the topographic changes of the site, from elevation +28 to +/- 12, to the promenade, and reviewed depth and loading constraints, entry locations between site and building, among other site elements. Materials include: precast concrete pavers (18" x 9"), metal benches and Black Locust (wood) benches.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PANEL:

The panel was very appreciative of the introduction to the project and the current changes to the proposal. Key recommendations from the Panel are summarized below:

- Through paving at the street level or by modifying the scale of the canopy, the residential entrance should be articulated to differentiate it from the surrounding retail entrances. That particular canopy should offer cover (a true canopy).

- Establish a more generous and well-articulated drop-off for future residents of the project – some recognition that the entry is a special place.
- The Panel acknowledged that it is preferable to keep the retail/occupiable interior space of the building focused on the promenade (and not on the designed green space).
- Consider operable windows for the tower element to reinforce the residential character of the building (rather than confusing it with a commercial tower).
- Consider reinforcing the tower with a trellis element as a “crown” to reference the other trellis/canopies established on the building.
- Canopies and awnings for the project might respond to sun conditions, in an effort to temper the environment of the interior.
- The articulation of the amenities level seems heavy. Consider reducing the scale of the architectural lines to reduce that perceived weight.
- In general, the coloration of the brick and the palette of materials were appreciated by the Panel.
- Provide a signage package for the building and retail tenant spaces.

Landscape:

Mr. Jones was commended for the high level of design focused on the landscape. The alterations to the landscape were well received, in particular, approaching the site work in a manner less graphically focused. However, an interim-phase landscape plan is required by the Panel to understand what will be implemented in the near term should the Phase Two building not go on line immediately following the completion of the Phase One structure. What will be in place as a site amenity should the second building not come on line as desired?

- There is concern for the “dead end” condition of the upper plaza area. Can there be some form of “escape” to the street level below?
- Circulation paths on the two terraces are focused along the edge of both greens due to the accessible ramp condition required. But can there be some form of relief from pushing the pedestrian along the alley drop away along Morgan Stanley (MS), or pull people away from the exposed garage wall on the opposite side?

Is it possible to incorporate the eastern edge of the lawn with the MS alley in any way (or does the accessible path make that impossible)?

- It was generally agreed that the sculptural wall of the garage (on the western side of the lower terrace) was preferable than a screening device, although there was a desire to see the “green wall” return from a previous iteration.
- There was significant concern for the use of metal as a bench material. Please consider using Black Locust on all custom benches to insure the prospect of seating in all seasons.
- Please insure that there is sufficient soil volumes to account for the prospect of “true-to-nature” tree growth for over-structure areas. Sections describing the proposed condition would be beneficial.

PANEL ACTION:

Recommend continued final development focused on the comments above.

Attending:

Daniel Henson – Henson Development

Kevin Johnson, Corey Chang – Ayers Saint Gross
Todd Harvey – BHC Architects
Jonathan Flesher, Michael Beatty, Chris Pfume – Beatty Development
Richard Jones – Mahan Rykiel
Natalie Sherman – Baltimore Sun

Dr. Meany; Messrs. Bowden, Burns and Rubin* - UDARP Panel
Anthony Cataldo, Christina Gaymon, Wolde Ararsa, Amy Gilder-Busatti –Planning Dept